

Appl. No. 09/655,223

Amendment dated November 17, 2003

Response to Office Action of May 19, 2003 (Paper No. 10)

Amendments to the Claims:

Please amend the claims as follows:

1-20 (Canceled).

26. (new): A method of packaging foodstuffs having a liquid element and a solid element, said liquid element comprising dissolved gases, the method comprising the steps of:

placing said liquid element in a first container, said first container having a volume of at least twice the volume of said liquid element;

placing said first container in a cavity of a vacuum packer, said cavity subsequently being evacuated by means of a vacuum pump to remove a substantial proportion of the dissolved gases from the liquid element;

combining said liquid element with said solid element of the foodstuff in a second container for a vacuum packing process; and

vacuum packing the combined liquid element and solid element;

wherein no heat is applied to the liquid element during the packaging process.

27. (New): A method in accordance with claim 26 wherein the said gas removal process removes substantially all of the dissolved gases from the liquid element.

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28. (New): A method in accordance with claim 26 wherein said first container has a volume of at least three times the volume of said liquid element.

29. (New): A method in accordance with claim 26 wherein said first container has a volume of at least four times the volume of said liquid element.

30. (New): A method in accordance with claim 26 wherein said first container has a volume of at least five times the volume of said liquid element.